

Public Participation

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CALFED Bay-Delta Program

Public involvement has been a key feature of the CALFED Program from the beginning. Since CALFED was created, CALFED has worked with the public, urban and agricultural water users, fishing interests, environmental organizations, businesses, and watershed organizations to define and evaluate alternatives for solving the problems confronting the Bay-Delta system. Ultimately, it is the active participation of the entire public that will help fix the Bay-Delta.

CALFED has conducted and/or participated in hundreds of public forums across the state to provide information on the CALFED Program and learn about local concerns. To inform the public of the upcoming hearings or meetings and to distribute current documents, we have established a database mailing list of approximately 10,000 addresses. Currently CALFED is conducting 17 public hearings in all areas of the state affected by the CALFED Program to discuss the draft Programmatic EIS/EIR and receive public comments (see attached figure -- Public Hearings Schedule).

To provide an ongoing public forum for the entire CALFED Program, an advisory group was formed. The federally-chartered group of more than 30 representatives from the state's leading urban, agricultural, business and environmental interests are serving as members of the Bay-Delta Advisory Council (BDAC), which meets regularly in a public setting to review the Program's progress and provide comments and advice. A general diagram of the CALFED Program structure showing the numerous work groups and technical teams is attached (see Program Structure).

Restoration Coordination Program

The Restoration Coordination Program manages the near-term ecosystem restoration efforts for the CALFED Program. Public and nonagency technical input is a key component of the program. To ensure broad input into the identification of ecosystem priorities and the selection of restoration projects, CALFED has formed both policy and technical advisory groups to guide the program (see attached diagram -- Restoration Coordination).

The Ecosystem Roundtable was formed to provide policy guidance for all aspects of the near-term ecosystem restoration efforts. The Roundtable, a subcommittee of BDAC, meets monthly in a public forum and includes a broad representation of urban and agricultural water users, environmental and fishery groups, and rural county and watershed groups. The Roundtable provides advice on all aspects of the program, such as identification of near-term ecosystem priorities, selection of projects for funding and tracking and monitoring of program performance.

In addition to the Ecosystem Roundtable, CALFED has formed technical teams and panels to also advise on the identification of priorities and selection of projects for funding. For the 1997 funding cycle a two-step process was established for review and selection of projects. CALFED received over 300 proposals for funding and created 13 technical panels to review and score the proposals based on the subject of the proposals. All proposals that scored 40 or more were directed to the Integration Panel that was charged with final selections of proposals. For both the technical panels and the Integration Panel, members were chosen based on their expertise and knowledge of the subject matter. The panels consisted of both agency and nonagency members to provide broader perspectives and balance. The Ecosystem Roundtable also advised on the final selection of the members for the panels.

Project Selection Criteria.

In the 1997 funding cycle, all projects had to meet three minimum criteria. The project had to comply with all applicable laws and regulations, it could not prejudice the ultimate decision on the CALFED long-term program, and most importantly it had to involve only willing sellers or landowners. Seven criteria were used to evaluate and score projects. These ranking criteria included:

- Ecological and biological benefits;
- Applicant's ability;
- Technical feasibility and timing;
- Compatibility and benefits to non-ecosystem CALFED objectives;
- Cost;
- Cost-sharing and local involvement; and
- Monitoring, assessment, and reporting.

In evaluating a project for cost-sharing and local involvement, applications were evaluated using considerations such as whether they had local support, whether they had already notified adjacent landowners or had a plan to do so, whether the action was supported by a local watershed plan, and whether the project had the potential for local benefits or impacts.

Project Implementation

CALFED has taken several important steps to ensure that projects are implemented with due consideration for local interests. Appropriate documentation must be prepared for each project under the California Environmental Quality Act and the National Environmental Policy Act as needed which provides an opportunity for public input. Furthermore, for approved projects that involve land acquisition, CALFED and the contracting agencies are requiring that the project manager notify adjacent landowners as parcels are identified for acquisition. CALFED has also supported numerous local watershed planning efforts where the local interests, including landowners, business interests, environmentalists, and local governments can develop their own plan on how best to manage their local watershed. This commitment to local empowerment and involvement is one of the most important keys to a long-term successful restoration plan.